

1b. PHOTOSHOP - Background Eraser Tool

The **Background Eraser** is especially useful with photos that contain lots of fine detail along the edges between the foreground and background, like, for example, if you want to erase the sky in an image without first having to select all of the trees below it.

With the Background Eraser selected, your mouse cursor will change into a circle with a small crosshair in the centre of it.

You can adjust the size of the circle directly from your keyboard just as you can with Photoshop's other brush tools. Press the **left bracket key** ([) to make the circle smaller or the **right bracket key** (]) to make it larger. You can also adjust the hardness of the edges by adding the Shift key. Press **Shift+left bracket** ([) to make the edges softer or **Shift+right bracket** (]) to make them harder. In general, use hard edges with the Background Eraser.

The Background Eraser in action.

The Background Eraser has little trouble erasing the blue sky while leaving the tree itself untouched, as long as the target symbol is kept over the sky and away from the tree.

If you slip and move the target symbol over the green colour in the tree, Photoshop will start erasing the tree. Just undo the last step and try again.

Sampling Options

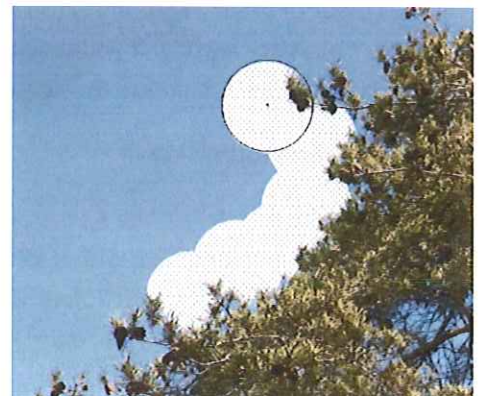
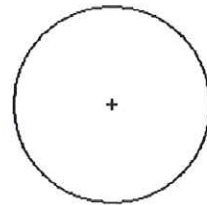
Whenever we have the Background Eraser selected, the Options Bar along the top of the screen displays various options for controlling how the tool behaves.

One of the most important behaviours we can change is how Photoshop samples colours under the target symbol, or if it samples them at all.

From left to right: Continuous, Once and Background Swatch sampling options.



The Background Eraser can be found nested under the regular Eraser Tool in the Tools palette.



Continuous is selected by default, and it means that as we move the Background Eraser around, Photoshop continuously samples the colour under the target symbol.

The Continuous sampling option works great when you're trying to erase backgrounds that contain multiple colours, but if the colour of your background doesn't change much, the **Once** option usually works better.



Selecting the Once sampling option in the Options Bar.

With **Once** selected as the sampling option, Photoshop is able to ignore the tree even though the target symbol moved over it.

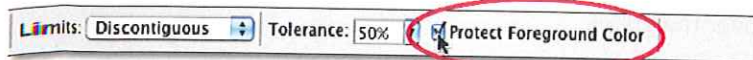
Tolerance, which determines how different a pixel's colour can be from the sampled colour for Photoshop to erase it. You'll find the **T**olerance option directly to the right of the **L**imits option in the **O**ptions Bar



The default Tolerance value is 50%. If you find that the Background Eraser keeps erasing part of the area you're trying to keep because the colour of the background is too similar to your subject, try a lower Tolerance setting. If your background colour is quite different from your subject, increase the Tolerance value.

Protect Foreground Colour

If you can't seem to get the Background Eraser to erase the background in your image without erasing part of your subject, try the **Protect Foreground Colour** option.



Click the checkbox to turn the Protect Foreground Color option. Click again to turn it off.

To get the Background Eraser to erase the background in your image without erasing part of your subject as well no matter what Tolerance value you use, try the **Protect Foreground Colour** option. Select the **Protect Foreground Colour** option in the Options Bar, hold down the **Alt** key, which temporarily gives access to the **Eyedropper Tool**. Then click with the eyedropper on one of the flowers to sample that colour. This will become the colour that's protected.

Just remember to deselect the **Protect Foreground Colour** option when you're done, otherwise the next time you use the Background Eraser, you could get unexpected results.

